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22 June 1966

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: White House Request for Memorandum on Prospects for Reduction of Soviet Troop Strength in Eastern Europe

1. Mr. Bator of the White House Staff called Mr. Smith this morning and requested a memorandum which would educate Mr. Rostow and himself on the "thin-out problem" in Eastern Europe.

2. He would like to know the facts regarding the current Soviet military presence in Eastern Europe, Soviet attitudes toward maintaining forces there, and the prospects for reduction of Soviet military strength in the area. If we do not have sufficient information to answer certain questions, we should say so.


3. Mr. Bator requested that the memorandum be available early next week.

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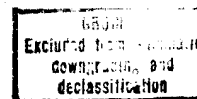
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29 June 1966

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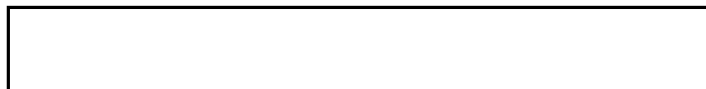
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INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

SOVIET MILITARY FORCES IN EASTERN EUROPE

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

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GROUP 1
Excluded from automatic
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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
29 June 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM*

Soviet Military Forces in Eastern Europe

SUMMARY

The USSR has been urging reform of the Warsaw Pact's structure on its Eastern European allies, and proposals for change will probably be on the agenda of the forthcoming Pact "summit" meeting in Bucharest. Measures which would result in tighter integration of all member states are not politically feasible, much as Moscow might desire them. These restraints need not, however, preclude a reorganization entailing some reduction of Soviet forces in East Germany (GSFG) and there are some indications that this is contemplated. This might make sense on military grounds in addition to bringing Moscow political dividends in Western Europe. But, even so, in the present climate, it is probable that Moscow will prefer a conservative course, and the odds are against a dramatic gesture.

*Prepared by the Office of Current Intelligence

1. The Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee (PCC)--the political and military chiefs of the member states--is scheduled to meet in Bucharest in early July. This will be the first meeting in about a year and a half of a body which is supposed to convene twice a year at a minimum. To accomplish even this much--agreement on the meeting itself--has meant hard bargaining by Moscow for more than six months.

2. It is not coincidental that the Bucharest meeting will come hard on the heels of De Gaulle's visit to the USSR, because Moscow and its Eastern European allies do not overlook the relevance of developments in NATO to their own alliance. To Moscow these developments represent an opportunity which can be best exploited if the political and military cohesion of the Eastern bloc is preserved, but to others, like the Rumanians, they hold the promise of a further reduction of Soviet hegemony in Eastern Europe.

3. Faced with this divergence of purpose, Moscow probably can not accomplish the degree of "strengthening" and "perfection" of the Warsaw Pact structure it has sought. The Bucharest meeting might, nevertheless, be able to agree on compromise arrangements which will satisfy Moscow's desire to maintain a degree of political and military interdependence in the Soviet bloc while giving the Eastern European countries a more genuine say in some of the Pact's decisive deliberations.

4. Much more problematical is that a reorganization of the Pact will entail a reduction of Soviet forces in Eastern Germany. This is a step, however, which would have appeal in both Eastern and Western Europe and could be undertaken without impairing Moscow's military security.

Soviet Forces in Eastern Europe

5. There are at present an estimated 280,000 Soviet troops in East Germany, 25,000 in Poland, and 50,000 in Hungary. These forces are all there at the invitation of the three governments concerned, but within the over-all legal framework of the Warsaw Pact Treaty which provides, in Article 5: "They (the contracting parties) shall likewise adopt other agreed

measures necessary to strengthen their defensive power, in order to protect the peaceful labors of their peoples, guarantee the inviolability of their frontiers and territories, and provide defense against possible aggression." In addition, bilateral status of forces agreements between each of these three countries and the USSR have been worked out since 1956. These agreements cover such matters as location of the Soviet troops in each country; sharing of the cost of maintaining the Russian troops; and the degree to which these troops are subject to the laws of the host country.

6. All told, there are twenty-six Soviet combat divisions in the three Eastern European countries, plus nondivisional combat support and service units. These forces are under the jurisdiction of three large field commands called groups of forces, apparently the peacetime designation of the Soviet wartime "Front." Most representative and by far the largest of the groups of forces is the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG)--organized into five armies--which commands 20 of the 26 divisions outside of the Soviet Union. The Northern Group of Forces (NGF) in Poland has only two divisions and the Southern Group of Forces (SGF) in Hungary commands the remaining four. It is the GSFG and the NGF which, together with some 24 combat-ready divisions of Poland, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, provide the major ground offensive and defensive capability against the central force of NATO.

7. Soviet ground forces in the forward area are also organically supported by the tactical aviation of the Soviet Air Force.

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8. The bulk of these forces are commanded by General of the Army P. K. Koshevoy, commander in chief of the GSFG. The NGF is commanded by Col. Gen. G. V. Baklanov, and the SGF by Col. Gen. Provalov. These forces, particularly the GSFG, are the mainstay of the Warsaw Pact.

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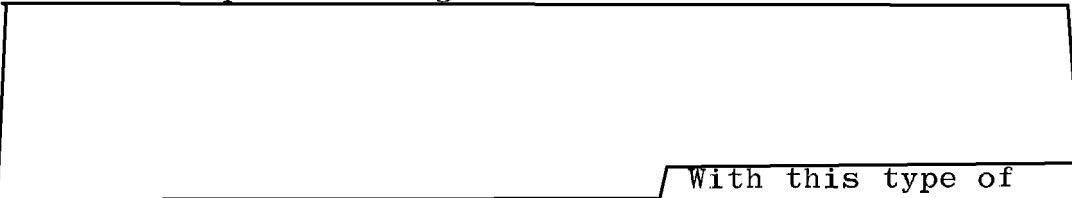
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Strategic Developments

10. Soviet planning for their forces in Eastern Europe is apparently based on the assumption that a war in Europe would begin with a NATO nuclear attack.



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With this type of conflict in mind, the Soviets purposely have kept logistic requirements low. In striving for maximum speed and decisive shock effect, the staying power of both Soviet tank and motorized rifle divisions has been sacrificed. This could be a serious organizational deficiency should the conflict be protracted.

11. In recent years, there have been indications that the Soviets are giving greater weight to the possibility of a nonnuclear or more protracted war. We have not determined how strongly this opinion holds in the USSR, but Soviet military leaders may have decided that some reorganization of forces in Eastern Europe is now required.

The Pact's Value to the USSR

12. The Soviet forces in East Germany are a first line for offensive operations and for defense against an attack from the West as well as a prop to the Ulbricht regime. The divisions in Poland maintain and protect the lines of communication and supply between the USSR and the GSFG. The troops in Hungary, although they have a less vital strategic role, control the alternate East-West supply and communications lines between the USSR and the West. They remain also, though probably to a diminishing degree, a reserve of support for the Kadar regime originally installed by force of Soviet arms in November 1956.

13. Politically the Pact is one of the few effective devices available to Moscow for holding the Soviet bloc together at a time when the forces of national self-interest are increasingly coming into play in Eastern Europe. For Moscow, the Pact organization would have even greater value if it were more fully integrated both militarily and politically, but this has become an unattainable goal. This being the case, the Soviet Union seems to be trying, instead, to strengthen the Pact militarily where it counts most--in the "northern tier," East Germany, Poland, and Czechoslovakia.

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The USSR's Broader Tactics

19. The Soviet Union is seeking to exploit differences within the Western alliance by suggesting that improved and profitable relations with Moscow are possible. This line also is aimed at reinforcing the growing belief in Western Europe that the USSR no longer has aggressive designs in that direction. In contrast, it alleges that West Germany is the only power on the Continent with claims on neighboring territory and with a vested interest in the perpetuation of tension, and that Bonn pursues these policies with the full backing of the US.

20. While holding out the promise of fruitful negotiations with Moscow on European security, the Soviets have attacked Bonn for propagating the "myth" of a menace from the East as a means of acquiring atomic weapons with which to satisfy its aggressive ambitions. Moscow hopes in this manner to promote in West Europe both a growing interest in detente with the USSR and a growing impatience with Washington and Bonn's position on contentious East-West issues. A reduction of Soviet forces in East Germany undoubtedly would be represented as proof of Moscow's contention that it is willing to take practical steps toward easing tension in Europe and that it poses no threat to the Continent.

21. Soviet purposes would, however, be nearly as well served by a token reduction of Soviet forces as by a sizable withdrawal on the order of five or six divisions. Such a step might, of course, merely be making a political virtue out of a military convenience. Such a dramatic gesture, particularly one

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which might arouse concern in the East German regime about its internal security, has so far not been typical of the style of the present Soviet leadership. This conservative temper, as much as anything else, leads us to anticipate that Moscow, in dealing with the problems of the Warsaw Pact and of European security, will move cautiously rather than boldly.

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